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29 APR 1974

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

26 April 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Under Secretary of State for  
Political Affairs

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: U-2 Photographic Reconnaissance of the  
Paracel Islands

1. The attached document is a proposal for a U-2 photo-  
graphic mission to obtain peripheral coverage of the Paracel  
Island group.

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2. In the past, missions in this area have been flown  
under the TACKLE mission approvals. However, the last TACKLE  
mission flown in the Paracels was in May 1973. Since that time  
the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has significantly increased  
the force level on the islands and has expanded its radar track-  
ing capability. While this action has not increased the  
vulnerability of a U-2 operating in this area, the plane will  
certainly be identified and tracked while flying this mission.

3. Because of the political sensitivity of the Paracel  
Islands it is  
felt that your approval should be obtained prior to flying an  
operational mission.

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NRO review(s) completed.

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PAGE 1 OF 3 COPIES  
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4. It is recommended that you approve this U-2 operational mission to obtain oblique photography of the Paracel Islands.

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J. W. Plummer

Attachment -  
Proposal Book

\_\_\_\_\_  
APPROVAL  
40 Committee Principal

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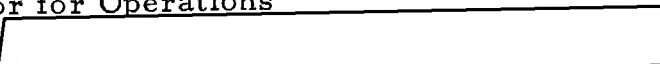


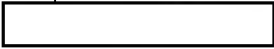
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U-2 PHOTOGRAPHIC  
RECONNAISSANCE OF  
THE PARACEL ISLANDS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.



II. OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

III. COVER

IV.



V. CLIMATOLOGY

VI.



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## II. OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

An IDEALIST U-2R will fly a round-robin mission [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to obtain coverage of the Paracel Island group.

Photographic flight lines will be planned to obtain "H" camera photography of these islands without overflying any of the land mass. This should provide good quality imagery of all military and construction activity taking place.

Normal TACKLE operational procedures will be used [REDACTED]

Maps of this mission are contained in Section VI.

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III. COVER

The Cover Plan will be in accordance with normal TACKLE operations.

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Page 5

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V. CLIMATOLOGY

April - May - June

A. GENERAL:

During April the easterly monsoon is still the dominant factor in the climate of the Paracels. This usually means a long over water trajectory of moisture laden air which readily produces low level cloud cover. In late April the spring transition to the southwest monsoon begins and the climate changes to the southwest monsoon type by the end of May. This change of climate increases the amount of high and middle level clouds resulting in a slight increase in mean cloudiness. Occasional anticyclonic curvature imposed on the easterly flow pattern results in subsiding air which decreases the cloud cover for short periods.

B. CLOUDINESS:

Mean cloudiness for daylight hours in the Paracels varies from 50 percent in April to 70 percent in June. Normally, 5 to 7 days of favorable weather conditions (2/8 or less cloud cover) are expected in April decreasing to 1 to 2 days in June.

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